

VZCZCXRO4884
RR RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHLH #0131 1921140
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 111140Z JUL 09
FM AMCONSUL LAHORE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4087
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4801
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 2098
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 1779
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0823
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0444
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 5239

UNCLAS LAHORE 000131

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: MINORITY RIGHTS ADVOCATE ARRESTED IN LAHORE

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Joseph Francis, National Director of the Center for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS) and prominent human rights advocate, was arrested and denied bail by the Lahore High Court on July 9 after traveling to London while on bail in a forced conversion case. Francis is currently being held in Islampura Police Station, Lahore. Post will continue work with authorities to ensure a quick resolution to Francis' imprisonment. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The Lahore High Court denied bail July 9 to close consulate contact Joseph Francis, National Director of the Center for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS), a prominent non-governmental organization which defends minority rights in Pakistan. CLAAS Program Officer Katherine Karamat told poloff on July 9 that the police detained Francis after receiving a First Incident Report (FIR) from a woman whose parents had reported her forcible conversion to Islam to CLAAS.

After the parents claimed that the husband kidnapped and forcibly converted her to Islam, she filed a FIR that alleged Francis had threatened her to convert back to Christianity.

¶3. (SBU) However, Islampura Sub Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Imtiaz Sarwar informed FSNI on July 10 that, while on interim bail in this case, Francis missed court hearings while on travel to London. Ahmin Javed, current advocate for Francis, clarified to poloff on July 10 that Francis' attorney at the time had presented a medical certificate that stated the court should grant Francis bail because he could not travel. After discovering that Francis had traveled to London, the session court deemed this medical certificate false and canceled Francis's interim bail, his attorney explained. The Lahore High Court rejected an appeal on July 9, serving as the catalyst for his arrest. Javed told poloff that he filed another application for bail to the Magistrate court on July 10. If the court again denies the bail, he continued, he would apply again to the session court and eventually the Lahore High Court. He expected a decision from the magistrate court on July 11. Javed told poloff that "some personal bias" had tainted Francis. Under Pakistan Penal Code 419, he explained, the authorities should hold the person, i.e. the attorney, who obtained and presented the false medical certificate.

¶4. (SBU) Post encouraged Provincial Law Minister Rana Sanaullah on July 10 to look into the arrest and work with the government to ensure good treatment during his detention. Sanaullah recognized the significance of Francis' detention.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Francis has acted as an effective advocate for minority rights in Pakistan, which may have influenced the decision to deny him bail. However, as his attorney admits, Francis essentially left the country while released on bail. We will continue work with authorities to ensure a quick resolution to Francis' imprisonment.

LOWE